DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 089 868 PS 007 223

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TITLE The Influence of Maternal Role Perception on Attitudes Toward and Utilization of Early Child Care Services.
INSTITUTION Pennsylvania State Univ., University Park. Inst. for the Study of Human Development.
SPONS AGENCY Pennsylvania State Dept. of Public Welfare, Harrisburg.
PUB DATE 1 Dec 72
NOTE 63p.; The Pennsylvania Day Care Study Project, Technical Report #10; For other related documents in this series, see PS 007 218 through PS 007 224

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.75 HC-$3.15 PLUS POSTAGE
DESCRIPTORS Behavioral Science Research; *Day Care Services; *Demography; Evaluation; *Mother Attitudes; Parent Child Relationship; *Parent Responsibility; Role Conflict; *Role Perception
IDENTIFIERS *Pennsylvania Day Care Study Project

ABSTRACT

This study was designed to assess the impact of maternal role perception and expectations upon the use of early childhood care services. Additional information was sought about the effects of various demographic variables such as residence, use of child care services, marital status, family size, and levels of education, occupation and income on these attitudes. Data were gathered by means of questionnaires and interviews conducted in the homes of 559 mothers of young children. An in-depth analysis was conducted on a subsample of 132 mothers. The majority of mothers experssed feelings of concern for their own status when considering child care services. Their role perceptions and expectations tend to dictate that whenever possible the mother should be in the home caring for her own children. Relatively few referred either to their child's needs or to the pragmatic aspect of early child care. The results clearly indicate maternal role perception as a key variable in service usage and service acceptability. The study was part of the Pennsylvania Day Care Study Project. (Author/DP)

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The Institute for the Study of Human Development
Center for Human Services Development

THE INFLUENCE OF MATERNAL ROLE PERCEPTION ON ATTITUDES TOWARD AND UTILIZATION OF EARLY CHILD CARE SERVICES

PS 007223

Prepared by:

Virginia Hayes Sibbison

THE PENNSYLVANIA DAY CARE STUDY PROJECT
Technical Report #10 December 1, 1972

ED 089868

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The Pennsylvania State University

December, 1972

The preparation of this report was supported under contract with the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare. The opinions and recommendations expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official position of the sponsoring agency.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Introduction

The past decade has seen an increased interest in early childhood care. Hopes and fears have been weighed against the theoretical, political, and social implications and possible consequences surrounding the implementation of child care services on a large scale basis. In spite of the apprehensions voiced by many, certain societal conditions indicate that there exists at least the potential for a rise in both the utilization of and the commitment to early childhood care. These situational factors include the following.

Population data suggests that despite over-all slowing in the rate of population growth in the United States, the citizenry is expected to expand by more than 20 million people in the 1970's. While the percentage of children in the population under the age of six dropped from 14% in 1960 to the projection of 11% in 1980, the numbers of children will stay approximately the same. These findings indicate that there are, and will continue to be, large numbers of young children in the general population; and that while efforts to control population growth have been somewhat successful, the challenge of assuming the responsibility for providing large numbers of children with good care during their developmental stages will continue.

The increasing incidence of nontraditional family structures suggests that supplementary support from institutions outside the home can play an important role in contributing to healthy families Many forces are involved in the emergence of new family behavior patterns, including the rising employment levels of mothers with young children. Since the beginning of World War II the number of mothers in the labor market has multiplied to almost eight times that preceding the 1940's. Today half of the nation's mothers with school-age children are working at least part-time (one-third with children under six), and by 1980 working mothers of preschool children alone are expected to increase by over one and one-half million.

Another contributing factor to the changing profile of the family is the increasing divorce rate, resulting at least for periods of time in one-parent families. It would seem reasonable to assume that this country will continue to expand its legal, social, and moral trend toward tolerance for the dissolution of marriage. New no-fault grounds for divorce, the increasing attention to the requirements of open communication and shared needs between marital partners, and the increased incidence of new nonlegalized cohabiting arrangements all suggest that the monogamous, legally binding marital contract will be joined by a variety of other types of family structures.

Yet another trend, the societal move away from extended family units to nuclear family units which reflect increased mobility patterns, will have an impact upon the majority of children and their families in the future. It is readily apparent that the family

unit will be increasingly called upon to provide the bulk of the security and stability that at one time was provided by an abundance of nearby relatives, old friends, and familiar communities. One potential mechanism for relieving this burden would be the establishment of child care centers in which children could quickly be absorbed into a frame of reference uniquely their own.

Viewing the use of early childhood programs as intervention techniques has centered around two areas of concern, the needs of handicapped children and the needs of children in poverty. The incidence of serious emotional disturbance in young children is usually not diagnosed until the child is well into his school years. Since it is known that mental illness is usually a developmental process, and that the numbers of children affected by mental health problems are large, it is essential to identify these children as early as possible. The emotional and mental health needs of young children constitute a major area of concern which would profit from the implementation of child care services on a wider basis.

Physical handicaps in speech, hearing, and sight affect large numbers of children. Again, early intervention can be critical in terms of the progress of the handicap, the adjustment of the child, and the development of potential capabilities.

Handicapped children also include the mentally retarded. In addition to those children whose retardation can be traced to genetic abnormalities, infections during the mother's early pregnancy, birth accidents, or postnatal infections or trauma, there are large numbers of children for whom the environmental variables of inadequate

prenatal and perinatal health care, nutrition, and social opportunities are the causal elements in the development of functional retardation. In 1969 the number of children in families below the poverty line exceeded 10 million, 3.3 million of whom were under the age of six.

A final reason for predicting the increased interest in child care by institutions outside of the home and family is the dissemination by educators of the research which identifies the importance of the early childhood years as a time for influencing the child's sense of himself, his attitudes, his orientation to the world around him, and the development of his intellectual interests and abilities.

The general societal factors described above indicate a potential for increased utilization of early childhood care. Other more subtle elements come into play however, which have direct bearing on the degree to which such child care services will be accepted and used.

One such factor which may have significant impact upon the acceptance of early child care by potential users is that of maternal role perception. While little empirical evidence is available, it would seem that the norms held by a mother (both consciously and subconsciously) of how a "good mother" behaves will have greater influence on her decision to use or not use child care services than will even more pragmatic variables typically thought to affect usage.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study is to explore the role perceptions and attitudes of users and nonusers of early child care services, and to determine what types of demographic variables influence the differences indicated between the two groups.

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CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

Early child care has been assessed in the following way:

> Day care in America is a scattered phenomenon; largely private, cursorily supervised, growing and shrinking in response to national adult crises, largely unrelated to children's needs, and, unlike the situation in many other nations, totally unrelated to any national goals for children or explicit goals for encouraging well defined character traits (Lazar and Rosenberg, 1971).

Perhaps because of the situation described above, little attention has been paid to the underlying psychological variables which affect the ways in which such services are perceived and utilized. While virtually no empirical research has been conducted on the impact of child care upon the role perceptions and expectations of mothers, some evidence exists that there are emotional factors which have influenced the decision to use or not use available facilities and that these responses have been conditioned by at least two primary assumptions built into American attitudes. The first of these, that children are best cared for by their own mothers, grows out of the tradition and folklore of our history as well as the research of the recent past.

America has long regarded the mother as the primary source of stability in the young child's world, and therefore the provider, the

barometer, of that child's future mental health. Unlike other countries (for example Israel and Russia), this belief has held fast, in spite of the fact that even within the framework of such a tradition, there have been vast changes in the structure of the American family. The reduction of the extended family unit to the nuclear unit of parents and children (excluding the presence of grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, etc.) and the increased mobility of the family reduces the sheer numbers of adults and other children with whom the child comes in contact within the intimate environment of the home. This means that the child is increasingly dependent upon the parents as the providers of his basic needs, attitudes, and stimulation during the critical preschool years.

Research in this area has in the past tended to focus on the "maternal deprivation" syndrome first described by individuals such as Spitz (1945) and Bowlby (1958). Spitz made a comparison between the infants raised in an accentuated mothering environment with those raised in a rarely mothering environment. He found that institutional deprivation contributed to severe physical, emotional, and intellectual deprivation (and in some cases even death); unusual reactions to strangers, ranging from indifference and apathy to terror; and a distinct susceptibility to infections and diseases. Spitz and others concluded that the critical element in determining the type and degree of damage done by deprivation is the mother's (or primary caretaker's) presence or absence. In fact, they stated that the deprivation <u>was</u> the lack of mother. Bowlby further suggested that the deprivation of a consistent maternal figure, particularly during the child's early

months, is conducive to the development of psychopathology and "affectionless characters."

Results of these early studies, while significant in their contribution to the development and implementation of more humane conditions for children left in the care of institutions, tended to be over-generalized. The absence of mother during any part of the child's preschool period (and perhaps even later) came to be viewed as the first crucial step on the path to intellectual, physical, and emotional retardation. These findings, rather than being confined to the specific circumstances which were being studied (over-crowded hospitals, insufficient human contact of any sort, inadequate stimulation, etc.) were interpreted as indicating that the separation of the mother and child would do irreparable damage to the child.

Later work by Pinneau (1955) criticized the generalizations which had followed the Spitz findings. He presented a good case for a lack of general stimulation as being the more critical component of deprivation. However, the widespread belief in the necessity of constant maternal care for the young child was not shaken.

Friedan (1963) has pointed out the speed and effectiveness with which day care facilities were provided to allow women to work during World War II. Further, she documented the extensive public relations campaign designed to resettle women into the home following these war years. Part of this advertising campaign played upon the woman's sense of her own adequacy as a mother should she decide to leave her home for a job. It was suggested that the real road to

feminine fulfillment rested in her involvement with the lives of her husband and their children.

Although women have swelled the ranks of workers since World War II, discrepancies still exist between the job types and levels of salaries available to women compared with those of men. Women have been faced with a double standard which mandates that they should work to enhance their economic conditions (particularly in cases where paternal income is either inadequate or nonexistent), but that "good mothers" stay home and take care of their own children. The society reflects generalized attitudes which imply that a woman fails if she relegates care of her children to others (White House Conference on Children, 1970; Pines, 1966; Ruderman, 1965; Stolz, 1963).

Studies have shown that the mother's attitude toward, and desire for, work influences the effect of maternal employment upon the child (Hoffman, 1959). Mothers who reflect generally positive feelings about the work they do tend to report less family disruption and stress as a result of their employment than do mothers who are reluctant workers.

Negative attitudes toward working outside the home appear to be derived from several factors. The first of these is the obvious importance that women attach to their roles in the home. This attitude reflects a value system which states that a woman's place is in the home caring for her husband and children. Leaving these areas of concern to join the work world implies either an economic crisis or dissatisfaction with the normal way things should be. A second critical factor is the type of employment opportunities

usually available to women. Most have access only to the less prestigious jobs of the society. A woman is reluctant to go against the community norms in order to obtain a job which pays little more than the costs of the baby-sitting arrangements available to her.

A third important factor which affects the individual's decision to use or not use existing day care facilities is the stigma of early child care as a branch of welfare operations. The White House Conference on Children stated,

> For decades, "day care" has been a part of "child welfare", where it has been tended by a devoted few, condescended to by many. It is still widely believed that only mothers on the verge of destitution seek employment and outside care for their children; that only disintegrated families, where parents are unfit to give even minimal care, seek outside support. The need for supplementary child care is often viewed as the result of other pathology in the family, and its use is justified only in forestalling greater disaster for the child.

Pines (1968) also discusses the negative attitudes toward child care services which are held by the general public. She suggests that such attitudes are facilitated by the fear that good day care facilities might encourage even more women to go to work, ". . . a fear entertained by male workers who wish to avoid competition, and by moralists of both sexes who believe woman's place is in the home." She also refers to comments by Lansburgh of the National Committee for the Day Care of Children who states that there is still tremendous resistance to the idea of day care because it is threatening to many people who prefer the security of the mother in the home.

The studies and ideas described above have provided some insight into the attitudes which potentially affect the use or nonuse

of available early child care. The literature suggests that at least two powerful attitude influences exist within the general population. They are:

1. The threat to the mother's sense of her own role and her adequacy in fulfilling that role should she decide to utilize services;
2. The perception of child care service use as an indication of either financial disaster or family pathology.

Nevertheless, these areas of influence have not been empirically assessed, either in the degree to which they do or do not affect service usage, or in the degree to which they in turn are affected by the demographic variables which are typically considered impactive upon attitude formation and maintenance. These variables include income, educational attainment, residence location, occupational status, number of children in the family, and marital status.

Conclusion: Hypotheses

1. The maternal role expectations and assumptions held by a mother will affect her attitudes toward the use of child care services. Mothers who perceive that their own role in the home is challenged by the idea of having the child cared for by someone else will tend to hold negative attitudes toward child care services.

2. Those women who perceive that a "good mother" stays at home and takes care of her own children will be less likely to report

the use of child care services than will mothers who are not as concerned with their own roles.

3. External circumstances, such as economic emergencies or the necessity for work, may result in the utilization of services while not changing an underlying negative attitude toward such use by the mother.

4. Mothers who spontaneously refer to their child when assessing the value of child care services will be more likely to utilize such services than will mothers who spontaneously refer to themselves.

CHAPTER III

PROCEDURE OF THE INVESTIGATION

Study Rationale

The sample used for obtaining data for this thesis was drawn from a field survey study conducted in the Pennsylvania Turnpike District[1] during the summer of 1971. The survey was conducted as part of a joint project between the Turnpike District and the Institute for the Study of Human Development of The Pennsylvania State University. The project was headed by Dr. Richard Ritti and coordinated by Virginia H. Sibbison.

The purpose of the original survey was to provide data to be utilized in the planning and development of child care facilities in this area of Pennsylvania. As a part of the federal commitment to assess the attitudes and self-perceived needs of potential service recipients, survey instruments were designed to obtain two basic types of information:

1. Objective and evaluative data on the existing agencies, centers, facilities, and services of the area;
2. The use of, the attitudes toward, and perceived needs for, child care programs as defined by the residents themselves.

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[1]The Turnpike District includes the six county districts of Huntingdon, Blair, Cambria, Fulton, Bedford, and Somerset.

The original survey orientation was to assess many facets of young children's and their families' needs, including those in the areas of pre- and postnatal care, medical and dental requirements, family planning and birth control accessibility, as well as the attitudes toward and utilization of early child care; however, only the data of the child care portion of the questionnaire were used for this report.

The purpose for the drawing of the subsample from which these thesis data are taken was to provide a more in-depth analysis of respondent attitudes toward maternal roles and responsibilities in the areas of child care.

Development of the Survey Instruments

The basic survey instrument consisted of an open-ended questionnaire given and filled in by an interviewer.

The open-ended questionnaire format was selected for use rather than a closed one for the following reasons:

1. Pragmatically, there was insufficient time to conduct the necessary extensive pretesting/analysis/pretesting pattern which would have been necessary in order to develop the response categories which would have accurately anticipated and facilitated responses of the participants.

2. It was anticipated that many of our respondents would be individuals with moderate to low educational levels, and hence that they might be more comfortable verbally describing their feelings and ideas than reading or listening to several, and then selecting one closest to their own.

The items of the questionnaire were designed to obtain the following base information of concern to the area of child care services:

1. Who are the users of existing child care facilities and how do they differ from those who do not use such services (demographic variables)?
2. What are the attitudinal differences between the users and the nonusers?
3. What are the perceived needs for child care arrangements as identified by the area residents?
4. How aware of the existing services are the community residents?

A pretest was developed during the early part of June. The interviewers were trained to use this pretest and they were instructed to note any areas of the questionnaire which might prove ambiguous, poorly worded, or offensive to the survey respondents. Their expeririences and subsequent comments were utilized in the revision of the pretest and the development of the final questionnaire.

Interviewer Selection and Training

The 26 interviewers chosen to do the field work were selected on the following criteria:

1. They were college students enrolled in curriculums which centered around social services and agencies (psychology, sociology, social work, etc.).
2. They had financial need for work.
3. They were members of the communities being surveyed.

It was hoped that these criteria would contribute to the strength of the communities themselves; that is, money would be going back into the families which were a part of the area through the salaries of these students. It also was hoped that the use of community members would reduce the possible resistance which an "outsider" might engender. While a potential biasing factor had been introduced by employment of these students (as there was always the possibility that they might fine themselves interviewing individuals with whom they were familiar) it was thought that the advantages of the situation outweighed the disadvantages.

Of the 26 students, 16 were assigned to identified, cooperating agencies, centers, or offices which dealt with the needs of parents and their young children. For example, several were assigned to the various Head Start centers scattered throughout the areas, others to the out-patient clinics in city hospitals, and still others to centers which dealt with the problems of "special" children. The remaining interviewers were assigned to cover large metropolitan,

semi-metropolitan, and rural areas on a "blanket" survey approach. That is, they surveyed these areas on a door-to-door basis, requesting interviews from families who had children six years or younger.

Sample Selection

Respondents for the study were obtained by two survey methods, a "snowball" technique and a "blanket" approach. The snowball effect took place by interviewing those mothers who already had children in the identified centers or agencies, utilizing the survey data from these mothers, and soliciting the names of friends and acquaintances who did not use these facilities but who also had young children. This process obtained additional participants by inquiry of the existing utilizers of services.

The random blanket approach sought to obtain a more generalized population sample, rather than the biased one (snowballing produced an inflated number of respondents who were actually using the services we were interested in assessing). It was designed to reach respondents in three basic types of residential communities, the metropolitan, semi-metropolitan, and rural.

All respondents were women with children six years of age or less. Efforts were made to obtain a wide range of participants, crossing the variables of residence, economic status, religion, education, and race. No controls on marital or employment status were utilized. The only two criteria required were that the respondents be residents of Pennsylvania, and that at least one child six years of age or less be in the home.

The total sample size used for initial data analysis was 558. All respondents were interviewed in their own homes whenever possible; on a few occasions the interview took place in a center or agency.

Subsample Selection

The respondents to the Pennsylvania Turnpike District area survey who are included in this thesis report were selected through the use of random sampling in order to obtain four sample cells of equal size and with equal distributions of the two variables determined to be of critical importance in the thrust of this study and in the analysis of attitudes. These two variables are residency and use of child care facilities. The following diagram describes the predetermined cell characteristics:

Child care users/ Rural residents (N=33)	Child care users/ Urban residents (N=33)
Nonusers of child care/ Rural (N=33)	Nonusers of child care/ Urban (N=33)

In May of 1972, reanalysis of the data to be used in this thesis report was begun. It was necessary to recode the following four questions:

1. Can you think of any possible reasons why children should be taken care of by someone other than their mother?

2. Can you think of some possible reasons why you might want or need to leave your child in the care of someone else?
3. In general, do you think that leaving children in the care of some child care service on a part-time basis is a good idea or a bad idea?
4. In general, do you think that leaving children in the care of some child care service on a full-time basis is a good idea or a bad idea?

The thrust of the new recoding process was to determine the basic attitude orientation of the respondents in terms of child care. The five such major attitude categories defined to be of significance to this report are the following:

1. The mother reports a negative feeling toward the use of child care. She states either unqualified refusal of such a service should one become available or she states that she would use such services only under extreme stress. Her response reflects her attitude that a mother's job is to be in the home caring for the children; hence, she perceives the utilization of child care as negative to her maternal role. Her response is self-oriented.
2. The mother reports a positive feeling toward the use of child care and indicates that she would willingly utilize such a service. She perceives this type of service as beneficial to her own situation. As in the case of attitude category 1 described above, the response is maternal self-oriented.

3. The mother reports a negative feeling toward the use of child care because she perceives that it will be harmful to her child. Her response differs from that of attitude categories 1 and 2 in that her orientation is toward the child and not herself.
4. The mother reports a positive feeling toward the use of child care because she perceives that it will be beneficial to the child. Her response differs from attitude categories 1 and 2 in that her orientation is toward the child and not herself.
5. The mother's response reflects a concern with the more pragmatic, physical conditions and characteristics of child care rather than an orientation to the human factors of either herself or the child. A typical response in this category would be, "I would use it if they provided transportation."

Statistical Procedures

The production of statistical data of the original sample was conducted by computer analysts employed through the Institute for the Study of Human Development. The statistical analysis of the data used in this report was conducted by the thesis author at The Pennsylvania State University computer center. All sample data were analyzed through the use of Analysis of Variance statistical procedures; the subsample data were assessed through the use of Chi Square significance tests.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The demographic variables which were identified as critical to the analysis of the subsample data are Use of Child Care Services, and Respondent Residential Area. In the original survey, findings indicated that 21% of the study participants used some form of child care service. The term "child care service" included day care centers, day care homes, nursery schools, Head Start programs, facilities for children with special needs, and did not include the usual "baby-sitting" arrangements commonly used by mothers. It can be assumed that this figure is higher than would be expected in the general population since it reflects to a degree the sampling technique of interviewing the users of identified agencies, centers, and facilities.

Processing of the original sample data clearly indicated that the use or nonuse of such services was related to certain demographic and attitudinal variables. For example, larger percentages of female-headed households report the use of child care services than do male-headed households (48% vs. 18%: $F = 32.36$, $df = 1,554$; $p<.05$). Since the female-headed households are far more likely to report a working mother than are the male-headed households (44% female heads; 24% male heads: $F = 10.29$, $df = 1,555$; $p<.05$), the most likely user of child care facilities in the total sample is a husbandless woman who has to work.

Of those homes reporting a male head of household, the poorly educated are more likely to report the use of child care arrangements than are the more highly educated (28% use by the grade-school educated: $F = 6.03$, $df = 3,482$; $p<.05$). The income level of the family also proves to be indicative of service use, as described in Table 1.

Table 1. Income level: Percentage of child care service use

Total Family Income	Total Sample Size	% Use of Child Care Services
Doesn't know or refuses to divulge	26	27
Less than $4,000	66	36
$4,000 to $8,000	240	22
$8,000 to $12,000	167	15
Total	545	

$F = 3.78$, $df = 4,544$; $p<.05$

Another variable which demonstrated enough influence on both other attitudinal and demographic variables to warrant its control in the subsample was respondent residence. In the original sample, 46% of the survey mothers reported rural residence, 54% urban. While 21% of the total sample indicated use of child care facilities and services, the percentage varies considerably according to residential area, such that only 14% of the rural respondents report usage compared with the 25% of the urban participants ($F = 10.85$,

df = 5,557; $p<.05$). In order to control for the influence of these two factors (service usage and respondent residence), the subsample participants are evenly divided into four cells with balanced distributions of residence and service usage. All analyses on the subsample were conducted within the framework of these four groups.

Demographic Variables

In the original sample, 14% of the respondents indicated single parent status, including the situations of divorce, widowhood, separation, and never having been married. Of the mothers who report use of child care services, 69% are married compared with the 91% marrieds found among the nonusers ($F = 20.33$, df = 1,556; $p<.05$). Similarly in the subsample respondents, 16% indicated single parent status. Table 2 describes the relationship between marital status, residency, and service use as they appear in the subsample.

Table 2. Marital status, residency, and service use: Subsample

	Residence			
	Rural		Urban	
Marital Status	Users	Nonusers	Users	Nonusers
Married	88% (29)	91% (30)	67% (22)	91% (29)
Nonmarried	12 (4)	9 (3)	33 (11)	9 (4)
Total	100% (33)	100% (33)	100% (33)	100% (33)

The rural residents are more likely to be in the married category than are the urban mothers (89% vs. 79%). It can be seen that, as in the original sample, those mothers who report use of child care services are less likely to be married than are the nonusers, particularly in the urban areas.

Because of the original survey emphasis upon the needs of families and their young children, data were gathered on the number of children six years of age or less in the home. While the majority of the mothers indicated that they have one child (43%) or two (41%) within this age range, the remaining 16% reported that they have three or more. A slightly larger percentage of respondents in the subsample reported more than two children six years of age or less (18% vs. the 16% mentioned above). The total number of children in the home has little effect upon the use or nonuse of child care facilities in either the total sample or the subsample. A very small percentage difference does appear between those families with more than four children and those with four or fewer, such that the larger families more often report usage; however, the difference is not statistically significant.

An interesting pattern emerged in both analyses which showed a bimodal distribution of the number of individuals in the home when cross-tabulated with the variable of service usage. Users are more likely to be found with families of six or more, or of two. This reporting of only two family members are the sample and subsample mothers who report unmarried status, and are primarily from the urban

areas (only 33% of the nonmarried subsample mothers are from rural areas).

Almost one-half (49%) of the original sample respondents who reported an educational attainment for their husbands indicated that level to be completed high school educations. An additional 30% fall below completed high school educations. The husband educational attainment for the subsample was considerably lower than that of the original sample, with only 39% achieving completed high school, and another 43% falling below. This discrepancy between the two analyses reflects the sampling procedure of the subsample selection. Since the users of child care services in the original sample were largely from the less than completed high school category (48%) with only 30% attainment of completed high school, it was to be expected that the sample cell control which structured that one-half of the subsample respondents were to be users of child care services would drop the general husband educational level.

The data for both the original sample and the subsample indicate a pattern for both rural and urban residents such that the husbands of the users of child care services tend to be less well educated, have lower incomes, and have more children in the home than do the husbands of the nonusers.

The information provided about mothers' educational attainment indicates a greater percentage of the mothers achieved a completed high school education than did the fathers (56% mothers vs. 49% fathers). However, as in the case of the fathers' education in the general sample, the users of child care facilities are less

well educated, have more children, and report lower incomes than do the nonusers.

In the subsample, the mothers' educational level differs between the users and the nonusers in the rural group, such that the majority of the nonusers have completed high school (71%) and an additional 19% have had educations above that level; only 39% of the rural users of child care have completed high school, with an additional 49% reporting educations below that level. The urban users and nonusers report similar educational attainments to one another (lower than that of the rural nonusers), but with a slight tendency again for the nonusers to be better educated.

Occupational status was analyzed for both the fathers and mothers in the original sample and in the subsample. In the total sample 65% of the husbands fall into the three lowest Hollingshead occupational categories (skilled, semi-skilled, and unskilled workers). This percentage is slightly higher among the users than the nonusers (73% users vs. 64% nonusers). It should be noted that a substantial percentage of the child care service users (31%) were those who indicated single parent home situations, and therefore percentages quoted above are based on a sample size of only 457. The occupation of the husband is related to his educational and income levels exactly as would be expected. Those men who hold higher status jobs also report higher educations and greater incomes than do those of the lower occupational categories.

As in the case of the total sample, the subsample subjects who reported their husbands' occupation indicated that the jobs fall

primarily into the three lowest Hollingshead categories (70%). Similar to the discrepancy between the analysis of the sample and the subsample with regard to the variable of husband educational level, a difference emerged between the percentage of the subsample reported in the lowest three groups (70%) and that of the sample located in these three lowest categories (65%). This increase in the lower categories completes the pattern of sampling influence upon the subsample which has been described in relation to husband educations and incomes. That is, since the users of child care services in the original sample tended to be of lower occupational status (husbands) than the nonusers, it was to be expected that the sampling procedure (cells which contained equal numbers of users and nonusers) would drop the level for the subsample members.

A total of 27% of the original survey mothers report having been employed within the preceding year. The largest numbers reported were in the urban areas. When analyzing these mothers who indicate that they have worked, a general profile emerges. The working woman tends to:

1. be found more frequently among the users of child care than among the nonusers (38% users vs. 24% of the nonusers);
2. report that she has four or fewer children than that she has more than four (30% of those who report four or less; only 13% of those who report more than four); and

3. be considerably more likely to report female head of the household (43% of such households) than do male-headed households (24% of such households).

The majority of the working mothers fall into the lowest two Hollingshead categories (27% in the unskilled; 32% in the semi-skilled). A considerably larger percentage of women fall into the higher category of clerical and sales workers, technicians, than do males (20% vs. 12%). As would be expected, the few women who hold jobs in the higher categories (19% in occupations such as teaching and other minor professions) also report the highest levels of educational attainment and income.

Thirty-nine of the subsample respondents indicated that they have been employed within the last year (29%). As in the case of the total sample, the majority of these working mothers (53%) hold jobs in the two lowest Hollingshead categories. Another 26% are found in the clerical and sales workers, and technicians group; 20% fall into the teaching and other minor professions categories.

There is a tendency for those who work to more frequently indicate child care service use than do those who are not employed (58% of the employed; 47% of those not employed). No real difference exists between the residence locations of the workers and the non-workers. While a slight difference does appear in the marital status of the workers and the nonworkers (79% of the employed are married vs. 86% of the nonemployed who are married), the difference is not significant.

Working women tend to have fewer children than the nonworking women, with only 26% reporting more than three children compared with the 39% of the nonemployed who indicate more than three children.

The final demographic variable analyzed for the sample and the subsample was that of combined income for the family. Even with 27% of the women in the total sample reporting that they had been employed within the past year, over one-half (57%) of the area families indicated that they had total incomes of less than $8,000 for the year. An additional 31% fall into the $8,000 to $12,000 category. As the variables of education and occupation had already indicated, the income level of the families who use child care facilities tend to be lower than those of the nonusers (68% of the users fall below $8,000; 53% of the nonusers fall into this group). Female-headed households are clearly more poor than are male-headed households, with 54% of the female-headed home reporting incomes of $4,000 or less compared with only 7% of the male-headed homes in this category.

In the subsample, 73% of the reported incomes are below $8,000 compared with the 57% of the total sample. Once again the discrepancy between the total sample and the subsample is a reflection of the subsample selection procedure which increased the proportion of users to nonusers. The income level is additionally affected because a substantial percentage of the users are nonmarried mothers and therefore further depress the subsample income level, since they are not contributing to dual incomes as are the married working mothers in most cases.

In conclusion, our general demographic profile of the users and the nonusers of child care services suggests that the users are more likely to be from urban communities, more likely to be female-headed households, and more likely to have lower educations, incomes, and occupations. The respondents in the subsample also reflect this general profile pattern.

Attitudinal Variables

Four basic questions were asked about the respondents' attitudes toward the use of child care services. They are the following:

1. Can you think of any possible reasons why children should be taken care of by someone other than their mother?
2. Can you think of any possible reasons why you might want or need to leave your child in the care of someone else?
3. In general, do you think that leaving children in the care of a child care service on a part-time basis (15 hours or less a week) is a good idea or a bad idea?
4. In general, do you think that leaving children in the care of a child care service on a full-time basis (more than 15 hours a week) is a good idea or a bad idea?

The primary purpose for selecting the subsample was to facilitate a more in-depth analysis of these attitude questions. A recoding and reanalysis through computer manipulation was conducted in order to meet this subsample objective. Results of the findings in the sample and the subsample are presented in sequential order for this thesis report.

Sample Data

The following Table 3 presents the percentage frequencies with which each of the possible responses was reported for both of the first two questions identified above. Because the participants frequently indicated more than one response, the total percentage exceeds 100.

It can be seen from the Table 3 distributions that the most frequently mentioned reason for care of children (either one's own or those of other people) outside of the home is in order to facilitate the mother's employment. Women differentiate the work rationale into two categories when responding about their own children, such that 30% reflect a stress factor ("only if I had to work") and the other 26% imply more of a maternal convenience ("if I wanted to work"). This attitude response which involves mother employment is not affected at statistically significant levels by the demographic variables (including residence and service usage) which were described in the preceding section.

In terms of a resistance indicator to the use of early child care by someone other than the mother, the first two categories

Table 3. Percentage frequencies: Category responses to Question 1 and Question 2

	Question 1 Care of others by others (N=537)	Question 2 Care of own by others (N=519)
No, it's the mother's job	7%	14%
Only in case of emergency	22%	30%
If the mother worked	60%	30%
Only if I had to work		26%
For the social/psychological growth of the child	30%	14%
For the educational growth of the child	9%	4%
To allow the mother free time	10%	12%
If the home environment is bad	13%	
Totals	151%[a]	130%[a]

[a]Percent exceeds 100% due to multiple responses given by some participants.

("no, it's the mother's job" and "only in case of emergency") show that more than one-fourth (29%) of these mothers reject such service under normal circumstances when considering other children; and 44% of them reject the possibility of such service use for their own children. If the percentage who report consideration only under the conditions of stress ("only if I had to work"; 26%) are added to the 44% rejecting care of their own by others, a full 70% of the survey mothers reflect a negative attitude toward child care service use for their children.

Statistically significant differences occurred in the "no, it's my job" category of care of own by others when analyzed according to the demographic variable of service usage. As would be expected, a larger percentage of the nonusers indicated this response than did the users of child care services (17% nonusers vs. 5% users: $F = 10.18$, $df = 1,516$; $p<.05$). One of the efforts of the subsample was to determine who are the mothers who report negative attitudes toward such services but report use anyway. These findings are described in the subsequent section on the subsample data.

Mothers are more likely to report the need for outside care as a benefit to the child in the case of other people's children than they are to do so in the case of their own children. A large percentage of the respondents reported in the categories "for the social and psychological benefit of the child" (30%), "for the educational benefit of the child (9%), and "if the home environment is bad" (13%) when discussing the possible usefulness of child care services to other people. As in the case of the resistance factor

mentioned above, the use or nonuse of a child care service produced a difference in response that is statistically significant in all three of the categories mentioned above in the following ways:

1. Those who report that child care service could be of positive benefit to the social and/or psychological growth of the child (other people's children) are more likely to be present service users (45% users vs. 26% nonusers: $F = 17.01$, $df = 1,535$, $p<.05$).
2. Those who report that child care service could be of positive benefit to the educational growth of other people's children are more likely to be present service users (14% users vs. 8% nonusers: $F = 4.14$, $df = 1,535$; $p<.05$).
3. Those who report that child care service could be of positive benefit to the child if the home environment is bad are also more likely to be users (18% users vs. 11% nonusers: $F = 3.79$, $df = 1,535$; $p<.05$).

Significant differences across the variable of service use or nonuse are also found when analyzing women's reasons why one's own child might be taken care of by others. A larger percentage of users (27%) than nonusers (11%) mentioned that such service would benefit the social and/or psychological growth of their own child ($F = 19.84$, $df = 1,515$; $p<.05$); 8% of the users vs. 2% of the nonusers referred to the educational benefit to their child ($F = 8.83$, $df = 1,517$; $p<.05$).

The one other response to this question about the reasons why care of one's own children might be turned over to others outside the home which reflected statistically significant differences was that of "to allow the mother child-free time." The demographic variable of household head was affective in such a way that the female-headed households were more likely to respond in this category than were the male (20% of the female heads vs. 10% of the male heads: $F = 4.96$, $df = 1,515$; $p<.05$).

The two final questions used for analysis of maternal attitudes toward child care services were the following:

> In general, do you think that leaving children in the care of a child care service on a part-time basis (15 hours or less a week) is a good idea or a bad idea?
>
> In general, do you think that leaving children in the care of a child care service on a full-time basis (more than 15 hours a week) is a good idea or a bad idea?

Results of this inquiry are presented in Table 4.

The question of child care on a part-time basis received a generally positive response, with 65% of the mothers indicating that they think children would benefit and another 27% stating that the mother would benefit. Mothers appear to readily acknowledge the usefulness to both themselves and their children within this part-time framework. None of the identified demographic variables have statistically differential effects upon this type of response.

Child care to this extent apparently does not challenge the mother's sense of responsibility and her maternal role, as only 12%

Table 4. Percentage frequencies: Category responses to Question 3 and Question 4

Attitude toward Service	Question 3 Part-time Care (N=551)	Question 4 Full-time Care (N=545)
The child will benefit	65%	24%
The mother will benefit	27	9
Only if necessitated by emergency situation	12	40
Only if program meets mother's specific requirements	2	3
Depends upon the child	2	6
Negative response reflective of mother perception of role and responsibilities	3	27
Other alternatives are better	2	3
All such arrangements are bad for children	5	16
Totals	118%[a]	128%[a]

[a]Percent exceeds 100 due to multiple responses given by some of the participants.

stressed that such a decision would be made only in cases of emergency and 3% directly related it to their feelings about maternal duties and obligations.

While only a relatively small percentage of these sample mothers do in fact use child care services (21% of the total sample), there does seem to be a positive, accepting attitude toward its usage in the community. This finding would appear to be in conflict with that described in the preceding pages. It seems plausible however that the most likely explanation for this discrepancy is that mothers are ambiguous in their perceptions of what is meant by "care of your own child (or other people's) outside of the home," and that their responses reflected to a degree their own interpretations of child care as an extensive, lengthy period of time outside of the home. Hence, when asked specifically about the value of part-time care (and provided with a time commitment definition), their response was generally positive. Conversely, when provided with a definition of full-time care, their resistance emerged again, such that only 33% indicated that either the mother or the child was likely to benefit from such arrangements.

This general resistance seemed to center around the mother's concept of herself and her maternal role, and her concern over the development of the child. Our respondents felt that it is crucial for the child to spend time with the parents in order to be socialized in the ways which they choose. They reported concern that full-time care outside of the home would weaken the parental influence in the areas of attitudes and values.

Those mothers who indicated that they felt their child would benefit from full-time care usually suggested that the child would be better off in a more structured, constant environment than in the part-time outside of the home, part-time in the home arrangement.

In general, while most of the mothers surveyed indicated a favorable attitude toward child care in response to attitude questions, the type of service which they find acceptable is limited to part-time care. Most mothers in the survey indicated that they were willing to utilize child care services under either of the following circumstances:

1. That the service be on a part-time basis which apparently allows the mother to release the child (and her responsibility for him) without challenging her sense of maternal role; it also aids in her decision if she perceives that the experience will be of use to the child;
2. That the child care service is required due to some emergency in the home.

Either of these two situations allows the mother to retain her attitudes about the role of a mother and yet use services.

Subsample Data

For comparative purposes Table 5 presents the percentage frequencies of the attitude responses found in both the sample and the subsample.

The only substantial difference which emerged between the sample and the subsample response frequencies occurs in the

Table 5. Comparison of category percentage frequencies within the Sample and the Subsample: Question 1 and Question 2

	Question 1 Care of others by others		Question 2 Care of own by others	
	Sample (N=537)	Subsample (N=132)	Sample (N=519)	Subsample (N=132)
No, it's the mother's job	7%	3%	14%	12%
Only in case of emergency	22%	17%	30%	31%
If the mother worked	60%	61%	30%	20%
Only if I had to work			26%	31%
For the social/psychological growth of the child	30%	34%	14%	17%
For the educational growth of the child	9%	10%	4%	7%
To allow the mother free time	10%	14%	12%	15%
If the home environment is bad	13%	12%		
Totals	151%[a]	151%[a]	130%[a]	143%[a]

[a]Percent exceeds 100 due to multiple responses given by some respondents.

work-related categories ("if the mother works" and "only if I had to work") of the question which dealt with care of one's own child by a service. While there is only a 4-point spread between these two categories in the sample, an 11-point spread exists in the subsample. Perhaps because of the generally lower occupational and educational status of the users of child care (and since one-half of the subsample mothers are users of child care services), the prospect of employment is faced with a greater sense of resistance among the subsample respondents. These mothers are less likely to seek work unless it is necessitated by economic pressure.

The objective of drawing the subsample was to facilitate a more in-depth analysis of attitudinal variables within the framework of maternal perceptions and orientations. For this reason the first two attitude questions (Can you think of any possible reasons why children should be cared for by someone other than their mother; Can you think of any possible reasons why you might want or need to leave your child in the care of someone else) were recoded to more clearly categorize the responses into the following four key orientations:

1. The mother reports a negative feeling toward the use of child care services. Her response reflects her attitude that a mother's job is to be in the home caring for the children; hence, she perceives the utilization of child care as <u>negative to her maternal role</u>. Her response is <u>self-oriented</u>.

2. The mother reports a positive feeling toward the use of child care and indicates that she would willingly utilize such a service. She perceives this type of service as beneficial to her own situation. As in the cast of attitude category 1, the response is maternal self-oriented.
3. The mother reports that attitude that the use of such a service would be of benefit to the child. Her response differs from attitude categories 1 and 2 in that her orientation is toward the child and not herself.
4. The mother's response reflects a concern with the more pragmatic, physical conditions and characteristics of child care rather than an orientation to the human factors of either herself or the child.

Having identified the new categories through which the attitudes toward child care could be assessed, cross-tabulations were run against the demographic variable of service usage. Table 6 presents the findings from this analysis.

In both questions, statistically significant differences emerged (Chi Square significance at the .02 level for question 1 and at the .01 level for question 2). Mothers who report responses which reflect positive feelings for the child's educational and/or social/psychological development are more likely to report use of child care services than are those whose answers reflect a self-orientation on the part of the mother.

None of the demographic variables identified throughout this report affected the distribution of these two attitude questions at

Table 6. Attitude orientations of subsample: Percentage of service use within categories of Question 1 and Question 2

	N	Question 1 Care of others by others: Service usage	N	Question 2 Care of own by others: Service usage
Perception of disadvantages; maternal oriented	25	56% (14)	50	42% (21)
Perception of advantages; maternal oriented	52	32% (16)	44	48% (21)
Perception that service will benefit child	36	72% (26)	20	80% (16)
External factors mentioned	8	44% (4)	0	
Totals	122		114	

a statistically significant level with the exception of service usage. These findings may suggest that more universal, pervasive influence is at work which transcends the influences normally exerted by demographic variables. It is suggested further that this influence is the mother's perception of her role and responsibilities. The large percentage of mothers who spontaneously refer to themselves rather than their child when asked about child care service (64% of those answering the care of others by others question; 83% of those answering the care of own by others question) is perhaps a reflection of this subtle factor.

The substantial percentage of mothers who indicate negative opinions of child care services for others (56%) or for their own child (42%), nevertheless indicate that they do use such a service. Statistical analysis was done to determine differences between these mothers who reflect negative attitudes but utilize the services anyway, and those who reflect negative attitudes but do not use child care services. While statistically significant differences did not occur along the prescribed demographic variables, the following general patterns emerged, producing a profile of the mother who disapproves of child care service but who uses such a service herself:

Care of others by others. Such a mother is more likely to report nonmarital status, have fewer people in the home (smaller families), have fewer young children, indicate that the husband (if there) has a lower education, and lives in a rural community.

Care of own by others. Such a mother is more likely to report nonmarital status, have larger families (three or more children in

the home), to indicate lower educational levels for both husband and wife, lower husband occupational status, have a higher income (due to dual employment), and lives in an urban community.

In general then, women who utilize services against their preferences are most likely to be those who report depressed family conditions.

Table 7 presents the percentage frequencies of the attitude responses in both the sample and the subsample to the following questions:

> In general, do you think that leaving children in the care of a child care service on a part-time (full-time) basis is a good idea or a bad idea?

No substantial differences occur between the responses of the total sample and those of the subsample. These original attitude response categories were recoded to facilitate analysis along the following dimensions:

1. The four new attitude orientations described in the analysis of the first two questionnaire attitude questions (see page 40).
2. The mother reports a negative feeling toward the use of child care because she perceives that it will be harmful to her child. Her orientation is toward the child and not herself.

The percentage distributions of the subsample within these new attitude categories are described in Table 8.

Table 7. Comparison of category percentage frequencies within the Sample and the Subsample: Question 3 and Question 4

Attitude toward Service	Question 3 Part-time Care		Question 4 Full-time Care	
	Sample (N=551)	Subsample (N=132)	Sample (N=545)	Subsample (N=132)
The child will benefit	65%	65%	24%	27%
The mother will benefit	27%	26%	9%	11%
Only if necessitated by emergency situation	12%	11%	20%	37%
Only if the program meets mother's specific requirements	2%	3%	3%	3%
Depends upon the child	2%	1%	6%	10%
Negative response reflective of mother perception of role and responsibility	3%	2%	27%	23%
Other alternatives better	2%	3%	3%	7%
All such arrangements are bad for children	5%	8%	16%	17%
Totals	108%[a]	119%[a]	128%[a]	135%[a]

[a]Percent exceeds 100 due to multiple responses given by some participants.

Table 8. Attitude orientations of the subsample: Question 3 and Question 4

	Question 3 Part-time Care (N=125)		Question 4 Full-time Care (N=124)	
Perception of disadvantages; maternal orientation	12%	(15)	43%	(53)
Perception of advantages; maternal orientation	14%	(18)	7%	(8)
Perception of advantages; child orientation	55%	(69)	28%	(35)
Perception of disadvantages; child orientation	6%	(7)	10%	(13)
Perception of disadvantages to both mother and child			8%	(10)
Perception of advantages to both mother and child	13%	(16)	4%	(5)
Totals	100%	(125)	100%	(124)

The frequencies described above were analyzed across the demographic variables (including residence and service usage) identified throughout this report. None of these variables produced a statistically significant difference among the attitude categories of the question concerning part-time care. Not even the impact of service usage found in the first two attitude questions (reasons for care of others by others and care of own by others) differentiated the ways in which these mothers reported their feelings about child care service on a part-time basis. None of the identified demographic variables affected the responses to this question in the total sample either. These findings substantiate those of the sample data suggesting a generally positive maternal response to the use of part-time care. A total of 82% of the subsample mothers responded favorably in their attitudes toward such service use.

Eighteen percent of the respondents indicated negative feelings about service use. As in the case of the questions about opinions toward child care for the children of others and one's own children, there were some respondents who reported negative feelings toward the use of even part-time child care, but who nevertheless utilize such a service themselves. Eleven women fell into this group (9% of the subsample total). They reflect the following general profile pattern:

Such a mother is more likely to be from a rural community, to report her marital status as married, to have a large family, and to indicate lower educational and income levels for the parents.

Distinct differences emerge between the attitudes toward part-time care (82% positive) and full-time care (39% positive). The findings on part-time care indicate that those responses reflecting at least some concern with the child exceeded those which reflected at least some concern for the mother (74% child vs. 39% mother); the responses to the full-time care question reverses this tendency, such that 62% of the responses reflect at least some degree of concern for the mother vs. 50% concern for the child. The greatest degree of category change took place in the increased percentage of mothers in the perception of disadvantages-maternal orientation category (31% increase) and in the decreased percentage of mothers in the perception of advantages-child orientation category (27% decrease).

Cross-tabulations with the demographic variables of interest to this report indicate that only the mother's educational attainment produces statistically significant differences in the responses to this question on full-time child care (χ^2 = .02 level). The following Table 9 presents these findings.

In general, the mothers reporting the attitude that services are disadvantageous to the mother are among the best educated group, with 11% completing college and another 9% who report educations beyond the high school level. However, a large percentage (24%) of those who refer to the advantages to the child in the use of full-time care are also more than high school educated.

Thirty-two percent (32%) of the total subsample mothers are in the category of less than completed high school. Of these mothers, the largest percent (62%) report the attitude that full-time is

Table 9. Subsample mothers' educational attainment: Attitude orientations toward full-time child care

	Less than complete high school	Completed high school	Education beyond high school	Completed college	Total	N
- to mother	32%	47%	9%	11%	43%	(53)
+ to mother	38%	63%	0%	0%	7%	(8)
+ to child	15%	61%	24%	0%	27%	(33)
- to child	23%	62%	15%	0%	11%	(13)
- to both	70%	30%	0%	0%	8%	(10)
+ to both	80%	20%	0%	0%	4%	(5)
					100%	122

disadvantageous to the mother. Of those mothers who have completed high school (51% of the subsample), the attitude break is pretty evenly distributed between the perception of the disadvantages to the mother (45%) and the perception of the advantages to the child (34%). Those mothers indicating educational attainment above high school but less than completed college (12% of the subsample), fall predominantly into the advantages to the child orientation (53%), followed by disadvantages to the mother (33%). The only six subsample mothers who have completed college all fall into the category of disadvantageous to the mother attitude.

The pattern which emerges shows the most poorly educated reflecting a primary concern for their own roles; the high school educated balancing out their concerns for both mother and child in a fairly even distribution; the more than high school educated weighing concerns for the child over their concerns for their own roles; and the completed college mothers completely reverting to the emphasis on the disadvantages of service use to the mother's role.

As with the findings of the question concerning the use of part-time care, the attitudes toward full-time child care service are not affected by any of the demographic variables, with the exception of the mother's educational attainment mentioned above. It would appear that negative attitudes toward the use of service which is this time-consuming and extensive more often reflect the mother's orientation to her own role (51% of the subsample responses) than they do an orientation to the possible disadvantages to the child (36%).

Forty-eight percent (48%) of these mothers who reported negative attitudes toward the use of full-time services also indicate that they use such a service. The general profile of these mothers is as follows:

These mothers are more likely to report urban residence, nonmarital status and female headed households, either a pattern of two people in the home (mother and child) or else large families, and a general constellation of lower parent educations, occupations, and incomes.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study conducted in the Pennsylvania Turnpike District indicate that the mother's perception of her own role and its responsibilities is significantly associated with her attitude toward the use of child care services. Analysis of the key attitude questions indicates that when asked for general opinions about service usage, mothers respond in one of the following alternative ways:

1. Most mothers (approximately two-thirds in this sample) tend to refer either directly to their own position in the home or to their perception of how "good mothers" behave. Their responses are self-oriented; they express concern over the threat aspect of such service use to their own perceived position in the family.

2. The majority of the remaining mothers indicate that their attitudes toward child care are a response to the perceived needs of, and advantages to, the child. In general, these responses are highly positive in the case of part-time care, and negative when considering full-time care.

3. Few mothers in the study spontaneously refer to the more pragmatic aspects of early child care typically considered to be of importance to usage (provision of hot meals, adequate transportation, convenient hours, and so forth).

Analysis of the data across the variables of maternal role perception has been hampered by the fact that the original survey purpose was to gather general information on many types of service attitudes and utilization, including those of pre- and postnatal care, medical and dental needs, birth control accessibility, etc. Nevertheless, the results presented in this report indicate that maternal role perception is a potentially fruitful area of research for analyzing the dimensions of child care acceptance in the community.

The findings further suggest that the influence of the variable of maternal role perception transcends the demographic variables normally considered important to understanding attitude formation. That is, how women perceive the behavior of a "good mother" appears to be so culturally established and generalized that it outweighs even the influence of income, education, or geographic residence. It would appear the belief that a mother's place is in the home is so pervasive that in the majority of cases only the most dire of circumstances will force women to release their children into the care of an early child care service Mothers who do make the decision to utilize such services are viewed as reflecting either extreme financial stress, personal selfishness, or the manifestations of internal family pathology.

It is evident from these findings that a crucial area has been neglected in the evaluation of public needs for, and responsiveness to, the implementation of early child care programs. Mothers who view such utilization as a reflection of their inability to manage their

own culturally defined roles will be among the more reluctant to accept established child care services and centers, even if the obvious needs of the child and the family would dictate that they should. Examples of mothers who indicate negative attitudes toward child care services, but nevertheless report such usage, have been identified and analyzed in this report. Their profile includes low incomes, educational and occupational status, and frequent father-absent homes. It is clear that the factors of depressed homes and economic situations have driven these mothers to seek child care services, not preconceived ideas of the usefulness of the program to the growth potential of the child.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY

Purpose

This report was developed to assess the impact of maternal role perception and expectations upon the use of early childhood care services. Additional information was sought about the effects of various demographic variables such as residence, use of child care services, marital status, family size, and levels of education, occupation, and income, on these attitudinal orientations.

Methods

Data were gathered through the combined use of questionnaires and informal interviews conducted in the homes of 559 mothers in the Pennsylvania Turnpike District. All of the respondents had children six years of age or less. An in-depth analysis of maternal role perceptions and expectations was conducted on a subsample of 132 women from the original sample. The subsample respondents were divided into cells with equal distributions of the two variables determined to be of critical importance in the sample (use of child care services and residency).

Major Findings

The majority of mothers in the study express feelings of concern for their own status when considering child care services. Their role perceptions and expectations tend to dictate that whenever possible the mother should be in the home caring for her own children. Relatively few of these respondents spontaneously referred either to their child's needs or to the pragmatic aspects of early child care. The mother's orientation to her maternal role has significant influence upon her attitudes toward such care. The findings of this report suggest that the demographic variables of residence, marital status, family size, and levels of education, occupation, and income have relatively little impact upon the perception held by women of their maternal responsibilities.

Conclusions

While little empirical research has been done to evaluate the effects of maternal role perception on the utilization of early child care services, the data in this report indicate that one key variable to such service success is the mother's orientation to her own role and its responsibilities. These findings must beheld tentatively; nevertheless, they clearly point in the direction of a new assessment of the variables affecting child care usage. Further research into this area should be particularly concerned with determining the role expectations of women, the norms developed by the respondents for

how good mothers are expected to behave, and the threat and/or anxiety levels to these expectations and norms which are triggered by the consideration of early child care service use.

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